

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6264

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4463

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KU, IZ

SUBJ: GOK TO CONTROL PRESS COVERAGE OF IRAQI RELATIONS;

PALESTINIAN RESIDENT JOURNALISTS ANSWER IRAQIS

REF: (A) KUWAIT 4404, (B) KUWAIT 4373

1. IN A LETTER DELIVERED SEPT 16 AND PUBLISHED IN ALL KUWAITI NEWSPAPERS, GOK INFORMATION MINISTRY UNDERSEC ORDERED PAPERS TO "CONSULT OFFICIAL SOURCES BEFORE PUBLISHING ANY NEWS RELATING TO KUWAITI-IRAQI RELATIONS" INCLUDING "ORDINARY NEWS, COMMENTS, EDITORIALS, PRESS CORNERS, OR . . . COLUMNS." MININFO ORDER ALSO PROHIBITED "MERE ANSWERS" TO ATTACKS ON KUWAIT.

2. PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THIS ORDER, KUWAITI BRANCH OF PALESTINIAN JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS FEDERATION (PJWF)
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ISSUED STATEMENT, CARRIED IN KUWAIT PRESS (AL ANBA,

SEPT 15), REJECTING EARLIER REPORTED JOINT ATTACK ON GOK BY IRAQI PRESS CONFEDERATION AND IRAQI BRANCH OF PJWF (REF A, PARA 5). STATEMENT SAID IT IS "NOT PERMISSIBLE" FOR JOURNALISTS IN IRAQ TO "INTERFERE" IN KUWAITI AFFAIRS. PRIOR TO GOK ORDER, SEVERAL KUWAITI EDITORIALISTS HAD EXPRESSED SIMILAR SENTIMENTS REGARDING IRAQI PRESS ATTACKS, NOTED REFTELS.

3. KUWAITI PRESS (AL ANBA, SEPT 16) NOTED THAT AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP) SPRUNG STORY ON IRAQI BORDER INCURSIONS SEPT 15. AFP REPORTED IT HAD LEARNED FROM GOK SOURCES THAT GOK HAD ASKED IRAQI GOVERNMENT TO REMOVE TROOPS WHO HAD "PITCHED TENTS" INSIDE KUWAITI TERRITORY AND THAT, IF GOI DID NOT RESPOND, GOK INTENDED TO SUBMIT MATTER (AND RELATED MATTER OF BORDER DEMARCATION) TO ARAB LEAGUE FOR RESOLUTION. KUWAIT PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT IRAQI TROOPS "PENETRATED FOUR KILOMETERS" ON SEPTEMBER 9, WHICH LED GOK TO TAKE "NECESSARY POLITICAL ACTIONS TO URGE IRAQ TO WITHDRAW FORCES," AND NOTED THAT IRAQI INCURSIONS "CAME ON HEELS OF CAMPAIGN WAGED BY INFORMATION MEDIA IN IRAQ" (AL ANBA, SEPT 16). KUWAIT PRESS SAID THAT GOK SOURCES DESCRIBED AFP REPORT AS "EXAGGERATED" AND PLAYED DOWN SERIOUSNESS OF IRAQ TENT PITCHING ON KUWAITI TERRITORY (AL RAI AL AM, SEPT. 16).

4. COMMENT: GOK APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT RECENT DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS WITH IRAQ, INCLUDING IRAQI VERBAL OFFENSIVE CRITICAL OF KUWAITI GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP AND TIGHTER LOCAL PRESS CONTROL, SHOULD BE KEPT OUT OF KUWAITI MEDIA. THIS SERVES TWO PURPOSES, FROM GOK POINT OF VIEW: (1) AVOIDS OFFERING VERBAL PROVOCATION TO IRAQI GOVERNMENT, AND IS IN LINE WITH PASSIVE KUWAITI MILITARY RESPONSE TO TERRITORIAL INCURSIONS BY IRAQI FORCES, REF B; AND (2) MINIMIZES RISK OF ANY OVERREACTION OR TENSION ON PART OF KUWAITI PUBLIC, STEMMING FROM ACTIVITIES OF IRAQI TROOPS IN BORDER AREA OR FROM CONTINUED ATTACKS ON GOK BY IRAQI PRESS.
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